

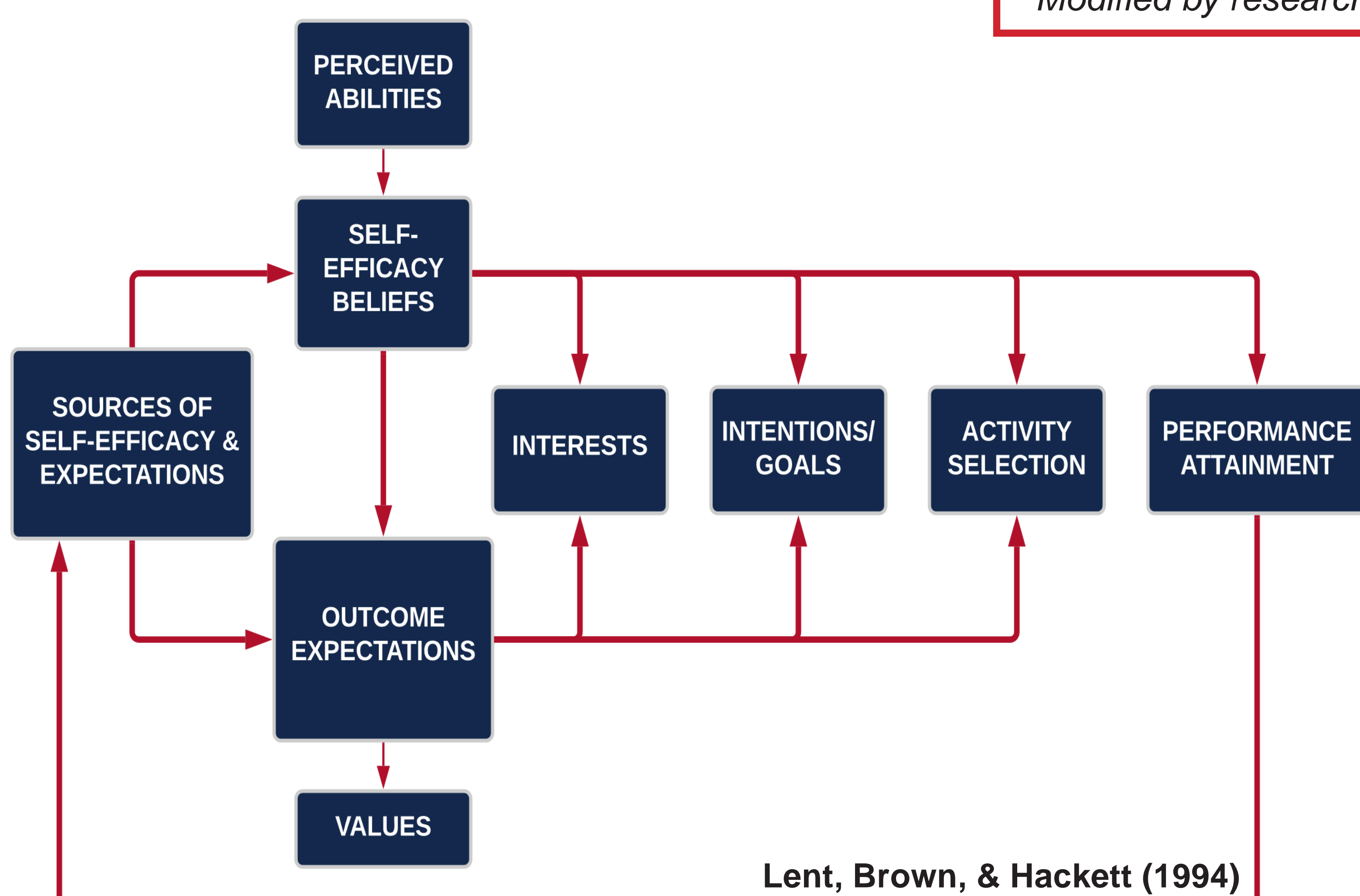
Examining the Effect of COVID-19 of Preservice Agriculture Teacher's Self-Efficacy, Teaching Intentions, and Career Expectations

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture teachers entering the profession have historically encountered a variety of challenges that tax their energy and motivation (Smith & Smalley, 2018). The COVID-19 lockdown is one such challenge that had a rippling effect on preservice teachers' career outcome expectations, intentions to teach, and teacher self-efficacy (Choate et al., 2021), which ultimately could affect their decision to enter the profession (McKim & Velez, 2016). With the agricultural teaching profession facing an ongoing shortage of new teacher candidates (Cross, 2017), the impact of COVID-19 could further amplify this issue, thus providing the motivation for this study.

Objective: Describe the impact of COVID-19 on planned years of teaching, intentions to teach, career expectations, and self-efficacy. Results of this study will assist teacher educators, early-career teacher mentors, professional development coordinators, and administrators in managing expectations of incoming teachers.

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) posited by Lent et al. (1994) served as the theoretical foundation for this research which seeks to describe the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on preservice agriculture teachers self-efficacy, intentions (goals), and expectations.



Lent, Brown, & Hackett (1994)

METHODS

This descriptive study examined the entire population of 185 agricultural education upper-division students and student teachers at California State University, Fresno in the fall of 2020. Participants were asked to respond to an online survey. The initial email invitation was followed by three reminders sent at week-and-a-half intervals.

The researcher developed instrument consisted of:

- Career Aspiration Scale (O'Brien et al., 1996)*
- Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001)*
- Vocational Outcomes Expectations Scale (McWhirter et al., 2000)*
- Teaching Intentions and Aspirations Scale
- Teaching Career Expectations Scale
- Agriculture Teacher Efficacy Scale
- Perceived COVID-19 impacts on participant's decision to teach agriculture, a single item asked to indicate "No Impact," "Minor Impact," "Moderate Impact," or "Severe Impact" on their decision to enter the agriculture teaching profession.

A panel of university agricultural education faculty established face and content validity. The instrument was pilot tested on 396 California agriculture teachers in 2007. Reliability was determined for the three construct scales through post-hoc analysis resulting in Chronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from .88 to .96.

*Modified by researcher.

Table 1: Results of Instrument Constructs by COVID-19 Impact Level

	No Impact	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Severe Impact
	<i>n</i> = 22 (25.8%)	<i>n</i> = 34 (40.0%)	<i>n</i> = 15 (17.6%)	<i>n</i> = 14 (16.4%)
Constructs	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
Planned Years to Teach	28.50	31.36	23.20	13.86
Teaching Intentions/Aspirations	61.86	64.35	63.20	61.43
Teaching Career Expectations	57.23	58.38	57.00	52.50
Classroom Efficacy	121.14	119.50	123.20	109.93
SAE Efficacy	66.09	66.35	63.93	60.21
FFA Efficacy	107.59	106.65	106.73	97.14
Program Management Efficacy	48.14	46.38	47.07	40.36
Overall Ag Teacher Efficacy	342.95	338.88	340.93	307.64

RESULTS

- Completed questionnaires were received from 85 of the 185 preservice teachers for a response rate of 45.9%. No notable differences were found when researchers compared non-respondents with respondents on student information obtained a priori (Miller & Smith, 1983) to control for non-response error.
- Respondents' average age was 22.6, 72.2% (*n* = 60) were female, 58.9% (*n* = 53) were Caucasian, 31.1% (*n* = 28) were Hispanic/Latino, and 48.9% (*n* = 44) reported their childhood home as a rural area. 25.8% of respondents indicated COVID-19 had "No Impact" while 16.4% reported it had a "Severe Impact" on their decision to teach.
- Table 1 depicts the respondents' levels of teacher efficacy, intentions, and expectations in relation to their self-perceived impact level of COVID-19.

REFERENCES



CONCLUSIONS



Participants who felt that COVID-19 had a "Severe Impact" on their decision to teach also indicated notably negative effects across all variables.



Findings are consistent with current literature on COVID-19 and the effect that unusual environments have on preservice teachers perceived self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and intentions (Choate et al., 2021).



University preparation programs and schools hiring these new teachers need to be cognizant of the additional challenges these teachers will face as they transition into the profession.



Teacher induction training will be even more essential to support new teachers who may have lower self-efficacy levels and weaker intentions to teach.



A longitudinal study is recommended to monitor and evaluate these participants as they progress into their teaching careers and determine how to best support them for long-term career success.